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convert him. In Detwok he acted as cook, and one day the naive boy who helped him came to Father Beduschi and said that Brother must have leprosy because he picked up very hot things without feeling anything. It was true, and the Brother lived the rest of his saintly life in a leper colony, which he called his parish.

In 1925 the Sisters arrived from Lul to take possession of the huts which had been built for them. Matters progressed slowly, but the years 1931 and 1932 seemed to see an awakening of interest among the Shilluk in matters of religion. This did not last, but the missionaries found it necessary to build a new church as the original mud building was not large enough for the congregation. They taught the natives how to make bricks and cement and how to build.

During the making of the bricks for this church an accident occurred which nearly resulted in the closing of the mision. On April 1st, 1931, some youths and girls were carying bricks out of the kiln, singing and pushing one another as they worked. Suddenly the whole pile collapsed, burying three girls and two boys. Some women who were going for water gave the alarm and soon the compound was full of frantic natives all shouting agreement with the chief who said: 'You see what happens when you allow your children to work for the foreigners.' They ran shrieking when a Father or Sister managed to extricate one of the victims, but none of them would help to carry out the dying children. The three girls died immediately and one of the boys a week later. Papiti, the king, was soon on the spot and held a conference with his chiefs, all but two of whom were clamouring for the expulsion of the missionaries. The king listened to their speeches and then rose to speak himself. 'Is not this a thing permitted by God?' he asked. 'Did the foreigners do it deliberately? If a crocodile takes one of our young men, on whom do we take revenge? Is this not an accident, too? Have not the foreigners helped us often? Who take care of our sick? Is not this permitted by God?' The chiefs rose: 'You have spoken well,' they said, 'let us go.' The mission

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unsatisfying a task as to build on sand. With no solid and permanent base on which to rest, a building after two or three rainy seasons begins to move and sink, and so the missionary ruefully surveys the ominous cracks that have already appeared in the walls of school buildings that only two years ago were his pride and joy. Windows and doors have warped and white ants have already wrought havoc in the woodwork. All the mud buildings need to be replastered without and limewashed within and the thatched roofs of many of them must be renewed. The Sisters' convent is in a bad way, although they, good souls, never complain; however, if something is not done about the back wall this year, it may be that they will be past complaining. And the church, too; but that is really beyond repair. It should be pulled down and rebuilt, but when and how, and who is expert enough to do it, and what he is going to use for money to pay for it, the missionary has not the slightest idea. In the meantime he hopes devoutly that the pictures on the walls will continue to hold the cracks together for another year or two.

The immediate task, however, is brickmaking. He must try to get a hundred thousand bricks made this year so that he will be able to satisfy his present requirements and leave a margin for further operations next year. Well, one thing about the Upper Nile is that it provides him with plenty of material for making bricks, namely, mud. Still, the stuff has to be dug and puddled and moulded into the right shape and size and then built into a kiln and fired. So the word goes forth among the Shilluk that there is a job of work to be done up at the mission and that applications for appointments as soil diggers, water carriers, sand carriers, mud puddlers and brickmakers and, later on, as kiln builders, furnace tenders, brick carriers, pole fetchers, roof makers, grass carriers and thatchers, will be given every consideration. The invitations, I say, go out, but the Shilluk as a rule is in no hurry to come in. And if his crop of grain has been good, he probably won't respond at all. What does that crazy white man up at the mission think that he, the Shilluk, is?

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Hasn't he been working for the past four months or so planting and weeding and reaping? Hasn't he got enough food now, that eked out with a little not too strenuous fishing will last him for six months or so, that is, if he can get his kids into the school again, and thus be relieved of the necessity of feeding them? And that reminds him, he must get that eldest son of his out of the school. The crop is gathered in now, so the goats can be let out to graze and the lad can mind them; it is time that he did something useful after the nice long holiday he has had up at the foreigner's place during the rains. Now it is his turn to have a holiday, and, by Nyikang, he's going to have one too; he's going to sit around and do nothing but drink beer until the rains come round again. Of course, there is that little matter of his tax that the other unpleasant foreigner from Kodok will be demanding soon. Of the two, he prefers the fellow at the mission; he sometimes gives him tobacco, but the only thing the one in Kodok has ever given him is three months in prison. Well, the tax is easily disposed of. His wife can sell some of the grain, or go out into the forest and collect enough firewood to sell to the Sisters in order to pay the tax. Thus pleasantly musing, he roars to a boy to fetch him his pipe, and to his wife to bring some more beer, and he sinks back against the fence of his house and relaxes gratefully in the warm sunshine.

If such is the general attitude of the Shilluk in the district, the would-be brickmaker and builder finds that his ambitious schemes have to be drastically modified. It is little use his going out, like the king's servants in the parable, into the highways and the byways to compel them to come in. Experience has taught him that if the Shilluk don't want to work, they won't, and no amount of persuading will make them. He manages to raise a couple of teams of brickmakers, a moulder and two labourers to each team, and a few thriftless youths who have no money to pay their tax or other means of raising it drift in and are set to work to supply the brickmakers with sand and water. But he is in a sorry plight; he won't get anything like the number of

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bricks he requires and is doubtful whether those that are made will ever be built into a kiln and burnt; and, should he get over that stage, whether the bricklayers will be forthcoming to put up even the minimum number of buildings he requires. So he tears his hair and goes through his list again and reduces it building by building, until there is left not a stone standing on a stone, even on paper. The Sisters' convent, however, must be done. He will be able to find a couple of bricklayers and to scrape together sufficient labourers to do that; indeed, he must, for he dare not face the Reverend Mother and tell her that she and her Sisters must, by their prayers, hold up that tottering wall for yet another year. His school expansion programme must suffer; the present crumbling and already overcrowded buildings will have to take yet a few more, and if there are more applicants than he can fit in, then they will have to be turned away.

The missionary, dear reader, is a kindly and humane man. He earnestly desires the spiritual and material welfare of the people among whom his lot has been cast, and he works hard and long to attain that end. But he is after all but a frail mortal, and once he has experienced the frustration of a wasted dry season—wasted through no fault of his, but because of the plenty that surrounds his flock—he cannot help but wish that Providence had not yielded up the fruits of the earth so liberally, and trusts that in future years the mission building programme also may be taken into Heaven's consideration. And so other rainy seasons find him watching the weather, not in the hope, as one might expect, of seeing a lowering sky and the preparations gathering overhead for a real life-saving storm, but quite the contrary. Of course he would be appalled and would indignantly and, as he thinks, quite honestly deny it, were he taxed with harbouring such base feelings as to hope that the labours of the planting season should be, if not exactly in ruin, still, not so bountifully blessed as they might be. If it is a choice between a bumper crop and a full and busy building season, there is no doubt where his preference lies. 'Of course,' he hastily tells himself, 'he doesn't want the people to starve. What an

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awful thought! But can't it be arranged that they will get just a sufficiency, and having no margin for taxes and other such luxuries will have to come to the mission and make his bricks and put up his buildings to get the money they need?'

And often enough, that is just what does happen. The rains have failed, or have been too plentiful, or fallen too early or too late, and the Shilluk gloomily surveys his ruined crop and looks sadly at the meagre harvest he has gathered. That certainly won't see him very far through the year, and there is none that he can spare to sell for tax money, and if he doesn't pay that soon, the chief will come down heavily on him and will impound some of his sheep and goats, or—and he reels with horror at the bare thought—one of his cows. His wife keeps nagging him for a new cloth and, as he knows from past experience, will keep on nagging until she gets it; an ordinary white one is not good enough for her now; she wants one of those fancy ones with flowers on, like the teacher's wife is wearing. These women are getting above themselves. The wild idea of selling a cow crosses his mind, but is immediately dismissed as absurd; he would sooner sell his wife, but anyway, the one idea is as fantastic as the other. Having thus surveyed the whole black situation he comes to the conclusion that has been facing him all the time, but which he has tried to evade as being too awful; he will have to go to work. And so, with a sigh, he bids farewell to his beautiful dream of living in luxuriant idleness for the next few months, and reluctantly makes his way towards the mission. The missionary, although, mind you, he is distressed that the harvest has been a failure, and appalled at the idea of his people being in want, positively purrs with satisfaction when early on Monday morning he sees the crowd that are waiting for employment. He singles out half a dozen good brickmakers, assigns them their labourers and sends them off to the brickfield for the task of clearing up and preparing the mud, as a preliminary to starting the moulding on the morrow. Six go scurrying with water carts to fetch water from the swamps, two to their disgust are armed with shovels and set to work in the sand pit, there to keep the line

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of sand carriers fully employed; half a dozen more, to their greater disgust, are given picks and sent to dig out the foundations of the new buildings, and of the remainder some are led to the site for the new huts and put to work to clean up the ground so that the foundations can be marked out, and others given the job of making and puddling mud for the replastering of the present mud buildings.

Now commences a period of unceasing activity on the part of the missionary. There are some seventy workmen employed in four different parts of the mission estate, and, except for the bricknakers who are paid a set price for every thousand bricks, each and every one of them is only too ready to steal away and fold his hands and close his eyes in repose as soon as the boss's back is turned. He, poor harassed man, has become the complete Pooh-Bah of the building industry; he must act as architect, general contractor, storekeeper, clerk of works, foreman, timekeeper and cashier, and at the same time keep the mission running normally. He does not forget his priestly duties, and so he is up long before the dawn to say his Mass and have as much as possible of his Office said before he goes out at 6 a.m. to call the roll and start the men on their day's work. He returns to the house to bolt his breakfast, but before he has finished, there are half a dozen ouside clamouring for attention. A wheel has come off a water cart, and the crew, never dreaming of putting it back themselves and finding a nail to hold it in place, but only too happy to have a legitimate excuse to sit down and do nothing, are doing just that. He slaps it back into place on the axle, secures it with a bolt and nut and scares the watermen into actually galloping off towards the river. A brickmaker has broken his mould and that requires a little carpentry and a few new screws. A digger complains that he can't find his shovel, is led firmly to the tool shed and falls over the missing article as he enters the doorway. A crowd of people has gathered at the back of the house and the number is increasing as more people come from the villages carrying poles or hanks of grass rope for sale. Each pole and hank has to be inspected, its value appraised and paid for on the spot.

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paid for on the spot. But the Reverend Pooh-Bah leaves them for the time being and goes off on the first tour of inspection. He meets the sand carriers on their way from the sand pit to the brickfield, and his suspicions are aroused by the easy and jaunty manner in which they are carrying the baskets which should be at least half full of sand. Examination of the first basket reveals just a couple of inches of sand in the bottom. The rest of the girls—for the sand carriers are ladies—don't wait to be inspected, but shrieking with laughter scamper off back to the sand pit where he follows them and ensures that they carry one legitimate load at least. Then having threatened the bearers with all kinds of penalties if they don't bring a proper load each time, he goes off to inspect the bricks. The moulders and their assistants are really putting their backs into it, for the more bricks they make, the more money they will earn, and already there are long double lines of newly made bricks stretching out in front of each man. In one case it is a matter of more haste, less speed, for yesterday's output belonging to one man has gaped and split in the hot sun, a sign that the mud has been badly mixed and the puddling has been scamped. These useless ones are rejected and the number deducted from the culprit's total. The missionary leaves the erring team vehemently arguing the matter among themselves, since a man from the hut-plastering squad comes along to tell him that they are held up for lack of water, and that the water carriers have been gone long enough to have made several journeys. He goes back to the house to get his bicycle, and ignoring the clamour that the pole and rope carriers set up at his appearance, speeds down to the river. The cart is there all right, half-way down the path, but there is no sign of the men who are supposed to be filling the drum. He spots one of them, almost hidden in the tall grass, engaged in washing himself, and a splashing a little further down reveals the presence of the other two happily employed in casting for mud fish. In a remarkably short space of time, however, they have the drum filled and are hastening back to the waiting plasterers, the irate Father grimly bringing up the rear.

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So he continues his tour of inspection, galvanizing the dilatory workers into fresh activity, and then returns to the house and commences the buying of the rope and roofing poles. That occupies the best part of an hour, and then, grown wise in the ways of these children of Nyikang, he makes sure that his purchases are put away, the poles on the flat roof of the house, the rope in a store-room where the wily Shilluk cannot filch them to re-sell them to him. Then it is time to make another round of the workmen, a procedure that he will carry out yet twice more during the morning and another three times during the afternoon. At 10.30 the morning's work is finished, and the labourers go home to reassemble at half-past two. There is no respite for Pooh-Bah, however. The affairs of the mission demand his attention, another group of rope sellers have gathered, the post-boat is due the next day, and he must write to Malakal for cement and to Kodok about the wood for the brick burning. He disposes of these tasks and also manages to find time to finish his Office before lunch. The afternoon's work is a repetition of the morning's; a continual tour of the different groups, the attending to the wants of one here and another one there, with one or two visits to the house to dispose of the rope and pole sellers.

Thus one day succeeds another, and week follows week and still the work goes on. By Christmas there are fifty thousand bricks ready for burning, the foundations of the new classrooms and the teacher's house are dug, the old mud huts have been replastered and the walls of the six new ones are already well above the ground, and everybody, Pooh-Bah by no means among the least, is heartily sick of the sight of mud, whether in its natural state, or made into bricks, or built into a wall, and is only too glad of the few days' respite the Festival brings. As soon as Christmas is over, the work begins on the kiln. The base, a rectangle twenty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide, must be built with care since it has to support the weight of thirty thousand bricks. It is three feet in height and is pierced by six triangular firing tunnels, each two feet wide at the base and two feet

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high at the apex. Its construction takes two bricklayers a full fortnight, and then another week is required to build up the bricks on the foundation, six men piling row upon row on edge in a herringbone pattern that leaves plenty of space for the flames to penetrate. Thirty thousand bricks are thus built up into a solid block some nine feet high, and the whole mass is plastered with mud to seal off all the cracks in the walls.

Meanwhile, the District Commissioner, who had promised to use his good offices in procuring sufficient wood for burning the bricks, has been as good as his word, and one day a steamer arrives bringing one hundred and fifty cubic metres of firewood. It looks a small pile when dumped on the shore, but its transport to the brickfield presents a formidable problem when the only wheeled vehicle available is a rickety handcart. Yet if it isn't moved soon, its transport will present no problem at all; the Shilluk will see to that. Fortunately the District Commissioner solves that difficulty too, for he arrives by lorry shortly after the wood, and kindly gives the harassed priest the loan of truck and driver to bring the wood from the river. A strenuous day's work sees the job done and the wood neatly stacked in two piles, one on each side of the kiln.

It is now the end of January. The brickmakers are well into the second fifty thousand bricks, the walls of the six new huts are finished and the construction of the roofs is well in hand. Grass rope is still required, but the number of roofing poles required is now complete and the demand now is for millet stalks. Women come in from the fields bearing huge bundles of them on their heads, and wait patiently until busy Pooh-Bah has time to attend to them. The swamps are emptying rapidly with the fall of the river and in another month the grass will be drying out ready for cutting. The work is going well and is keeping up to the time-table, but all this has not been accomplished in complete harmony and smoothness. The same relentless vigilance has to be kept up day after day to keep the indolent up to scratch; disputes break out among the workmen and often sounds of strife at

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one end of the compound bring Pooh-Bah hurrying from the other to add those of peacemaker and judge to his other rôles. Workmen tire of their particular jobs (water carrying is particularly hated) and demand another one. The water-carrying difficulty is not solved until a roster is formed so that everyone except the lordly brickmakers and bricklayers take their turn. Hoes begin to disappear, but that little pastime is effectively put an end to by stopping the price out of the wages of every individual in the squad concerned. After the second one disappears it is found to be too expensive.

Now it is time to fire the kiln. The six tunnels are roughly bricked up on one side and filled with firewood and straw from the other. The fires are lighted at dusk, and once they are kindled must not be allowed to go out until the firing is completed. Soon each fire is blazing merrily, and the draught forcing the fire back through the mass of dry wood and straw quickly turns each tunnel into a roaring cavern of flame. The kiln presents a grand spectacle in the darkness, as great tongues of fire lick out from the openings and billows of smoke from the wood and clouds of steam from the still drying bricks envelop the whole structure. The firing continues on one side for two nights and two days; then that side is bricked up and the other side opened and the process for firing continued for a like period. The interiors of the tunnels are before long glowing white-hot masses of fused brick, and the kiln soon becomes fiercely hot as the flames mount up, searching through each crack and crannny to reach the top of the mass. When the firing is completed, the tunnels are blocked up again, any cracks that have appeared in the walls are plastered over anew and the mass is left to cool down, a process that takes about a week. By now there are sufficient bricks to commence the second kiln and this is built in the same manner as the first. But the priest has noted with concern that the firing of the kiln has consumed far more wood than he had anticipated. The strong north wind which now blows with full force every day has helped on the fires more enthusiastically than he would have liked. He cannot go to the expense of getting more wood from Kodok, and the

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forest is too far away to make wood carrying from there an economical proposition, so he has to fall back on what resources the mission can offer. A squad goes off armed with saws and axes to attack the leafy avenue of trees which line the road to the river. The operation is euphemistically called 'pruning', but by the time it is completed and the Father's wood hunger is satisfied, the trees present a sad and sorry appearance. However, they will recover, and anyhow he can't afford to shed a sentimental tear over their appearance with sixty thousand bricks yet at stake.

With the breaking down of the brick kiln, revealing the rows of lovely bricks, those on the top and sides baked a golden brown, and the centre ones red and blue, the real work of the season begins; the rebuilding of the Sisters' convent and the erection of the new schoolrooms and the teacher's house. This is a task beyond the amateur capabilities of our Pooh-Bah, but expert assistance is at hand. One of the Prefecture staff is an authority on building, and he, accompanied by a Brother, arrives on the postboat, having been snatched from his labours in some other mission to start the work here. Scaffolding is erected round the dangerous wall and with consummate skill the expert directs the operation of pulling down the wall in sections, planning to rebuild one portion before passing on to the destruction and rebuilding of the next. The Brother meanwhile is setting out the foundations of the other buildings. The Reverend man-of-all-work, however, has little time to pause and admire such dexterity, for the unceasing daily round still claims his attention. The second kiln is nearing completion, and must be fired as soon as possible, and the first one, now being rapidly demolished, has to be rebuilt with the remaining mud bricks, about another thirty thousand, and fired again. He is still a one-man purchasing board for the produce of the district, but now the grass rope and millet stalks have given way to bundles of grass for thatching and the work of thatching the new huts and some of the old ones has already started.

So far, apart from minor hitches, accidents and squabbles,

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*797 and can be burnt in a few days, one section of the convent wall has been rebuilt and the second started, the walls of the new brick buildings are rising and the thatching is going on as fast as grass can be obtained.

But yet another verse of missionary 'poetry' has to be written. The third and last kiln has been fired and during the first night and day all goes well. During the second night of the firing, however, the faithless tenders of the fires desert their posts to slumber and sleep during the night watches. The fires burn low and die out. In the morning the sleepers awake and try frantically to re-light the fires before their negligence is discovered and also before the kiln is spoiled. But they are too late on both counts. They are caught in the act by an angry Pooh-Bah who on his way to say Mass has noticed the lack of light and activity around the kiln. The fires are rekindled and the firing continues in the hope of saving the kiln, but the damage has been done. Most of the bricks are poor yellow specimens that crumble at a touch, and the kiln has to be written off as a loss. The unworthy servants are removed with ignominy from their stewardship. Still, despite this calamity, the work is able to go on. With the two kilns already burned and the reserve from the previous year there are sufficient bricks to complete the jobs on hand, although there is no margin left for any emergency that might arise and no reserve for the following year. By the end of April one or two warning showers have fallen just to let one know that the rains are on the way. But the programme is almost completed. The Sisters are safe and secure behind a stout new wall, the walls of the classrooms and house are up and roofs are on and doors and windows are being fitted. The thatching is done and all the huts both old and new are tight and sound to withstand whatever storms the rainy season may bring.

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Pooh-Bah stretches and yawns mightily, and then turns to his sadly neglected desk. He is well satisfied with what has been achieved, and his building troubles are over for another year.